

**The affect of the pandemic on online communication in business**

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**Author Note**

The Article was developed during the Erasmus Course, Research Methodologies and Scientific Communication, taught by Professor Jose Manuel Azevedo. Portions of these findings were presented as a poster at Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administracao do Porto.

### Abstract

2020 saw a sharp increase in the use of online communications tool. Online communication has created a new reality in which all forms of personal contact are digitized. It strips away many of the features typical of true face-to-face communication. Personal communication is traditionally one of the tenants of marketing communication. Opportunities for face-to-face communication during the pandemic have all but been eliminated during lockdown. As a result, businesses are barred from most ways to communicate face-to-face with their customers. The main purpose of this article is to present the changes and challenges caused by the pandemic as well as identification and explanation of the key impacts of this situation on marketing communications. Another goal was to analyze the impact of the pandemic on workplace and communication characteristics. An online survey was conducted tso we could find out what other people think about that and if they see the changes. The target group was company employees and owners, and 33 participants were included in the results. A majority of respondents (60,6%) agree that today's businesses require as much face-to-face communication as they do online. The survey results, unfortunately, show that the pandemic has had a negative impact on business functioning, with the majority of respondents agreeing (66,7%).

*Keywords: Negotiation, Success, Marketing communication, E-business, Covid-19, Pandemic*

### Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 has undoubtedly brought about unprecedented changes across all aspects of our lives (K. Stöhr & Esveld, 2004). The business landscape, in particular, has experienced a significant transformation, with organizations forced to adapt swiftly to the new realities imposed by social distancing measures and remote work requirements. As face-to-face interactions became increasingly limited, online communication emerged as the lifeline that kept businesses connected, allowing them to navigate the storm and continue their operations (Jorda, Singh, & Taylor, 2020).

In the wake of the pandemic, the reliance on virtual platforms for communication has skyrocketed, leading to a surge in video conferences, virtual meetings, and remote collaborations. Online communication tools such as video conferencing applications, instant messaging platforms, and project management software have become essential for maintaining connections and fostering teamwork (Funk, Gilad, Watkins, & Jansen, 2009). This paradigm shift has not only expedited the integration of technology into daily business operations but also compelled organizations to reimagine their strategies and leverage the full potential of online communication to drive growth and resilience. Furthermore, the pandemic has prompted businesses to rethink customer engagement and adapt their marketing strategies to a predominantly digital marketplace. With physical interactions severely restricted, companies have turned to online channels to reach and connect with their target audiences. Social media platforms, email marketing, webinars, and live chats have become vital means of

engaging customers, promoting products and services, and building brand loyalty in an increasingly competitive environment (Asmelash & Cooper, 2020).

### **Literature Review**

Business enterprises had to quickly adjust to the new reality and deal with continuing challenges and issues in the economic markets as a result of the global crisis that followed the start of the coronavirus pandemic (Arzhanova K.A., Beregovskaya T.A. & Silina S.A. 2020) The coronavirus epidemic that broke out around the turn of 2019 and 2020 will be remembered for a very long time because it fundamentally altered how people behave. Nobody anticipated the changes that this deadly and contagious illness would bring about back then. Nobody anticipated the pandemic would continue for as long as it did when the first instances of the illness were reported. Each of us had to adjust to the new laws, rules, and sanitary and epidemiological limitations, as well as prioritize our own and our loved ones' health. This unusual circumstance compelled society to alter its customs and way of life. The coronavirus pandemic has compelled societies to drastically reduce interpersonal interaction, alter the way they work and learn, and massively isolate themselves. I had to cut back on my social interactions and work from home. Videoconferences, chats, and webinars are new and extremely popular forms of communication that have emerged during the coronavirus pandemic and have greatly advanced and eased work during the crisis. On a global stage, the terms "work from home," "home office," and "online classes" have become buzzwords. Aleksandra Filus & Danuta Kamińska (2022) examined the influence of the pandemic on online communication in business. They stated that in order to prevent emptiness and information gaps from appearing during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the company's managers had to make sure that information was given in a thorough and trustworthy manner. Information sharing was constrained because most person-to-person interactions took place over the phone or the internet. The findings from the interviews they did, with different managers, indicate that continuous communication activities were conducted without a predetermined plan and were more intuitive and spontaneous. There was no one in charge of the messages sent to the world in the surveyed businesses. The WhatsApp app, which has come to be associated with applications for video calls, including those with family and usually business conferences, was once very well-liked. Today, however, video calling is a function found in all messaging apps. As a result, such communication is now a common feature provided by all significant platforms.

The distinction between face-to-face and video conversations is becoming increasingly hazy as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Research backs it up. ClickMeeting hosted the meeting. As it was presented, there were only 59,425 organized internet events in 2019, but there were 245,144 in 2020. According to the study cited in the article, there were 2,471,350 webinars in 2020 compared to 870,579 in 2019.

Naveen Donthu (2020) discusses the history of pandemics, and how they are recurring biological phenomena that cannot be prevented and can only be dealt with through preventive

measures. It is pointed out that our society is unprepared for large-scale outbreaks and that our guiding principles are efficiency and economic gain, rather than safety. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced businesses to close and has disrupted commerce, leading to short-term and long-term challenges. What is more the need for research into the effects of pandemics on our society is highlighted, including the impact on our views regarding freedom, healthcare, and government intervention, as well as our acceptance of monitoring. They also mentioned the dynamic nature of markets and the COVID-19 outbreak's impact on them. It emphasizes that markets are not just firms but a network of actors following a set of norms. The pandemic provides a unique opportunity to study how markets are created and disappear in a limited time span. The author also predicts lasting effects such as countries becoming more nationalistic and firms rethinking their supply chains. The special issue includes 12 parts that discuss the impact of COVID-19 on various aspects of business and management, such as consumer behaviour, interventions for controlling pandemics and mitigating strategies. Paul, P. (1996) was focused on special issue of the Journal of Business Research which focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on various aspects of business. The special issue covers topics such as corporate social responsibility, gender diversity, public health, managing uncertainty, and retail operations. Some of the key findings include the importance of companies adapting their operations to factor in COVID-19, the need to involve women in decision-making processes in public health management, and the importance of international business research. The articles suggest that companies that are able to adapt to the challenges presented by the pandemic will be better positioned to thrive in the post-COVID-19 marketplace. It is predicted the changes that higher education institutions will experience in the future, and four innovative strategies for businesses to combat crises are identified.

Anna Krizanova, George Lăzăroiu, Lubica Gajanova, Jana Klietkova, Margareta Nadanyiova and Dominika Moravcikova, (2019), discuss the importance of online marketing communication for the sustainable development of hotels. The authors propose a methodology for implementing an indicator. suitable for the evaluation of the effectiveness of online communication activities in the Slovak hotel industry. The paper is based on a marketing survey conducted by the authors, which aimed to determine the use of online marketing communication by Slovakian hotels and to map the current state or methods of evaluating their effectiveness. The authors found that return on investment (ROI) is the most appropriate metric applicable in the evaluation of the effectiveness of online communication tools. The authors describe a study conducted to determine the level of use of online marketing communication activities and to map the level of evaluation of the effectiveness of these activities in the hotel industry. The study used statistical hypothesis testing methodology to analyze the data collected from 313 hotels and motels. The Chi-square test of independence was used to calculate the test statistic for the hypothesis, and IBM SPSS Statistics software was used to conduct the correspondence analysis. The results of the study showed that only 17.3% of hotels regularly evaluate the effectiveness of all forms of online marketing communication

used, while 30.7% do not evaluate the effectiveness at all. The reasons for not monitoring performance and evaluating the effectiveness included high evaluation costs, the current situation is sufficient, lack of resources, and evaluating the effectiveness only in some forms of online marketing communication. The study found no significant variable that would reveal the descriptive factor of the hotel, which more often performs an evaluation of the effectiveness of all forms of online marketing communication used. Only in the case of the size factor was the existence of the dependence of the examined variables confirmed, but only at a low level of reliability interval, which indicates a very low dependence. The study also found that 59.1% of respondents perceived the significance of monitoring the effectiveness of online marketing communication, while 24.3% were in favour of monitoring performance and effectiveness as meaningless, and only 16.6% do not see it as meaningful. Finally, the study found a statistical dependence between the perception of the benefits of evaluating the effectiveness of online marketing communication and the evaluation itself.

The internet has revolutionized the way businesses operate in the modern world. The web provides numerous benefits to modern businesses, ranging from increasing brand visibility to reducing operational costs. With billions of people using the internet every day, businesses have access to a large and diverse audience. By creating a website and engaging in social media, businesses can establish an online presence that can help to increase brand awareness. The vast majority of consumers are reachable through online channels. By creating a strong online presence, businesses can reach out to potential customers who may not have been aware of their brand otherwise, and customer engagement is easier, because of social media. With the help of social media and online communication tools, businesses can communicate with their customers in real-time. This allows them to provide better customer service and build stronger relationships with their customers, answer their questions, and respond to their feedback. Social media is an important channel for businesses to engage with their customers. Another significant benefit of using the web in modern businesses is cost savings. With the help of the internet, businesses can reduce their operational costs by automating many of their processes. This includes everything from customer service to marketing and sales. The web also provides businesses with powerful analytics tools to help them to understand their customers better. By tracking website traffic, social media engagement, and other online metrics, businesses can gain valuable insights into their customers' behavior and preferences. Analytics tools allow businesses to track their marketing efforts and adjust their strategies accordingly.

### **Method**

In order to answer the research questions an online questionnaire was created in the end of April 2023. The target group were business students, employees and owners of companies. An online survey was selected with the aim of reaching many people who were working during the coronavirus pandemic and after, so they are able to tell the difference. The survey started with identifying the

participants' age and level of education. In total 33 people participated in the survey and all of those participants are later on considered in the results.

The survey continued by asking the participants questions about the pandemic affect the financial performance of businesses. The participants were given a selection of answers to get information about their personal experiences and believes.

The diversity of answers forces survey participants to reflect on the effects of the pandemic, as well as their analysis and finally their personal opinion on their positivity. The participants were allowed to choose only one option. Added to that, the participants should be able to tell their opinion about the changes in nature of the working hours.

The next section of the survey referred to the business effectiveness and communication connected with business meetings. The participants should be able to acknowledge the difference between technical communication via the network and e-mail and traditional communication through meetings, as well as refer to their effects in practice. After that, the survey presented a question about the changes in the nature of the workplace. The participants were asked specifically about the pandemic leading to a change in the place of work from companies and offices to homes, or it leading to changing the workplace to safeareas. The questionnaire closed with the question about personal opinion of the society group which was affected the most by Corona pandemic.

### **Results**

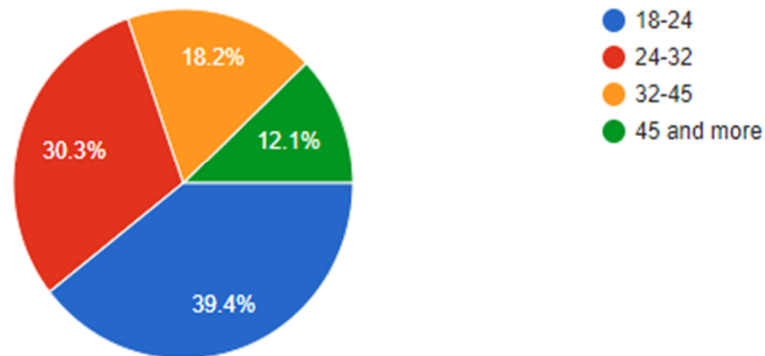
We were able to survey 33 people of different ages and education levels, and the results were as follows:

#### **Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample**

About 39% (13 people) was between the ages of 18-24 and about 30% (10 people between the ages of 24-32 and 18%) (6 people) whose ages ranged between 32-45 and about 12% (4 people) whose ages are over 45, This means that more than two-thirds of the referendum was conducted by young people

**Figure 1**

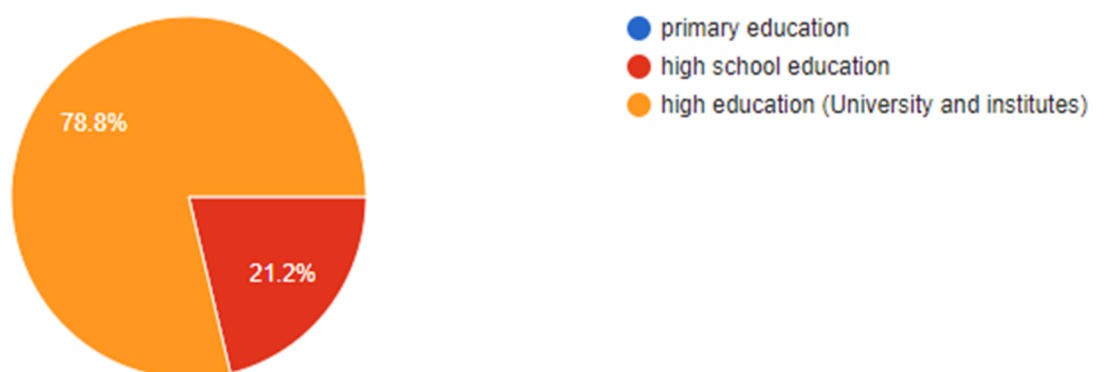
Age of the participants



Level of academic education

Most of the participants obtained higher academic education (university or institute), where the percentage was as follows:

More than 75% (26 persons) of the participants obtained higher academic education (university or institute) and approximately 20% (7 persons) obtained education for the second stage, while none of the respondents obtained only primary school education

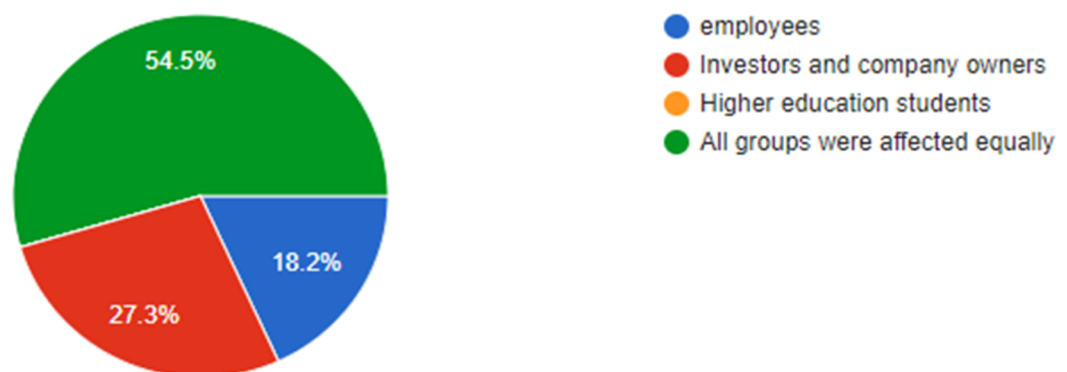
**Figure 2**

The social group most affected by the pandemic

We asked the participants which social group is most affected by the pandemic, and their answer was as follows:

About 18% (6 people) responded that employees are the most affected by the pandemic, and approximately 27% (9 people) said that the most affected by the pandemic are investors and company owners, while the largest group, with a percentage of 54% (18 people), believed that all segments of society were affected pandemic equally

**Figure 3**



### Discussion

Overall, the results showed that the sample of individuals from diverse age groups and educational backgrounds. The majority of respondents were young adults, with 39% falling within the 18-24 age range. This suggests that the study primarily captured the opinions of the younger generation. Participants between the ages of 24-32 accounted for 30% of the sample, while those aged 32-45 and over 45 comprised 18% and 12% respectively. This indicates that the survey managed to include participants from a wide age range, although the younger demographic was overrepresented.

Regarding educational attainment, a significant proportion of respondents, approximately 75%, had obtained higher academic education from universities or institutes. This finding indicates a well-educated sample that potentially reflects a higher level of knowledge and critical thinking skills. Additionally, around 20% of participants had received education for the second stage, while none had only completed primary school. This suggests that the sample generally possessed a moderate to high level of education, enabling a more informed understanding of the research topic.

Perceptions of the Most Affected Social Group during the Pandemic: When asked about the social group most affected by the pandemic, the participants' responses varied. Approximately 18% of respondents (6 individuals) believed that employees were the most affected. This viewpoint acknowledges the challenges faced by workers in various sectors, such as job losses, income reductions, and increased work demands.



Interestingly, around 27% of respondents (9 individuals) identified investors and company owners as the most affected group. This perspective reflects an understanding of the economic impact of the pandemic on businesses, with many facing financial losses, closures, and operational disruptions.

The majority, constituting 54% of participants (18 individuals), believed that all segments of society were equally affected by the pandemic. This perception indicates a recognition of the widespread and multifaceted consequences of the global health crisis. It highlights the interconnectedness of individuals within society and acknowledges the far-reaching implications, including health, economic, and social impacts.

The findings from this study provide insights into the socio-demographic characteristics and perceptions of a sample regarding the impact of the pandemic on different social groups. The sample primarily consisted of young individuals with higher academic education, reflecting a potentially well-informed and educated group. The perceptions of the most affected social group varied, with employees, investors/company owners, and the entire society being identified as the most affected.

Overall, the results suggest the need for targeted support, inclusive decision-making, recognition of interconnectedness, and a focus on education and awareness. By considering these implications, policymakers and organizations can develop more effective strategies to address the challenges faced by different social groups and promote resilience in the face of future crises. The study highlights the importance of including diverse perspectives in decision-making processes. As the perceptions of the most affected social group varied among participants, it is crucial to consider multiple viewpoints to ensure that policies and interventions are equitable and address the needs of all segments of society.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the current study was to shed light on the transformative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on online communication in the business sphere. As the world confronted unprecedented challenges, organizations swiftly adapted to a new era of remote work and social distancing, leading to a paradigm shift in the way businesses connect, collaborate, and engage with stakeholders. Through our exploration, we have observed that the pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital tools, propelling businesses to embrace online communication as a vital lifeline. Video conferences, virtual meetings, and remote collaborations have become the new norm, enabling teams to maintain productivity and foster collaboration across geographic boundaries. Moreover, businesses have recognized the need to rethink their customer engagement strategies, leveraging online channels to connect, inform, and nurture relationships in the absence of physical interactions. The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the business landscape, propelling online communication to the forefront of organizational operations. This crisis has acted as a catalyst for change, compelling businesses to embrace digital tools, reimagine customer engagement, and adapt to a new era of remote work. By

understanding the lasting impact of this shift, businesses can navigate the challenges, capitalize on the opportunities, and position themselves for success in an increasingly interconnected and digital future. The recognition that all segments of society were equally affected underscores the interconnected nature of the pandemic's consequences. This understanding can guide policymakers to adopt a holistic approach that considers the interdependencies between health, economy, and social aspects when developing strategies to mitigate the impact of future crises. The high level of education among the sample indicates the potential for a more informed understanding of the research topic. This highlights the significance of education and awareness campaigns in providing accurate information, promoting critical thinking, and fostering a better understanding of the broader impacts of crises like the pandemic.

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